the stars are never far away by beetleteetle

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will byers moving from minnesota to indiana may not be a bad thing

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"that afternoon will learned a lot about mike and his friends. that dustin and lucas have been a “thing” since before time began and that anyone who said anything bad about it could shove it. that jane was the coolest person ever, you just wouldn’t know behind the simple facade. that max was a self described “useless lesbian” and mike definitely agreed. that mike and jane were romeo and juliet but way, way better and with a lot less death. and he most definitely learned he wants to be a part of the odd cast of characters that made up the ‘party’."

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Will was decidedly, not a fan of moving. After a collision of the Gods, or in other terms a fight between his parents, his mom had told him they were never going near Minnesota again.

His parents were constantly at odds, and there wasn't a serene evening. He hated it. His mother was like the sun, beaming but still a flame, but if you went too far out of her comfort zone you'd freeze from her coldness. His father was more like dark matter, constantly taking up the space when his mother couldn't. This wasn't a good thing, as after all, you couldn't see dark matter, and Lonnie was a gaping void in Will's life. No wonder Jonathan wanted out.

One thing you should know about Will Byers is that he avoids conflict at all costs. Or more accurately, he avoids everything at all costs. He has people to sit with at lunches, but he'd never consider them his friends. They all keep their heads down and are there for the same reason he is. They wouldn't be special, and they'd all rather keep to themselves unless it was imperative they couldn't. Will didn't mind them, but he's always wished they were more enthusiastic, or interested in anything at all. At least having them around gave him the best notes, and led him to the straight A life.

"I'm moving." He states, daring to hope someone cares.

"Oh, bye."

"Yeah, see you at some point."

"What was your name again?"

Not the reaction he was hoping for but he guessed it could never be

full of tears when no one really bothered to care. Will was sixteen now, and honestly he was excited for a change. He may make some new friends, he hoped. By some strange possibility someone could want to be his friend. But in the time of being at Lutsen High, he hadn't really had a personality placed onto him. He had interests, music, art, and arcade games. An idea of who he was? Not at all. However he knows this isn't uncommon, so he is at least semi-okay with it. He dresses in plaid and likes the Clash. Is that really all there is to him? He'd certainly hoped not, because how could he make a friend if he was almost two dimensional. The only thing he can really know is that if he had friends, he'd die for them.

The trip to Indiana was wearing him thin, but it really was better than being near his father. An 11 hour long road trip leaving at the crack of dawn wasn't the most pleasurable thing, but his mom let him put on his music, so he was happy. Happy to be free.

Hawkins wasn't the most striking place, but it wasn't completely horrible. In his first week, Will discovered the arcade and the other assortments in the town. Starcourt Mall seemed cool, he didn't visit all that much in the early days of his new life. They'd left at the start of Christmas break, luckily for Jonathan Hawkins was closer to New York than Lutsen. Their house was nice, and whoever must have lived here before must've had a kid, because a few miles away from the house, Will discovered a fort. Inside was a note declaring whoever found this place could have it because "Timmy has moved out". So Will made it his second home, and called it 'Castle Byers'. He put up a sign saying all friends welcome, in hopes that one day he might have a friend.

He sought refuge in Castle Byers over the break, but also in a place in the mall called Scoops. Ice cream in the winter isn't a person's ideal choice, but he liked the atmosphere. He found himself listening to music, enjoying a good strawberry swirl, and drawing. He'd taken notice of a group who visited as often as him, and he learned about

them from afar. They weren't hard to notice, not like his old group, and they had such magnetic and meaningful personalities. The girl with the ginger hair falling past her shoulders, he never saw her without a knowing smirk and a skateboard. The boy with a mane only a god like him could pull off, he seemed to have a kinship with the much older, cute employee. His shifts are usually shared with another girl, she's nice. There was another boy in the group, one who was composed until someone mentioned something he deemed illogical. He's funny. There was a girl with curly brunette hair, nose buried in a book. Whenever she was brought out of her story-filled trance, she became a beam of hope and laughter. And there was one more, a boy. He seemed like the epitome of perfection, to be cliche. He wrote, he was handsome, and had a determination unmatched by anything else. Everything started with his eyes and ended with his smile.

One thing Will hadn't known about friendship is that it doesn't always need to start with a formal 'Do you want to be my friend?'. It can start with absolutely anything and everything.

"Clearly you aren't waiting for anyone like me and my friends have wondered for the past week, so may I have this seat?" It was the penultimate day of break, and the boy with the dark mop of hair asked to sit with him. He seemed even more nonchalant up close, so Will clearly wasn't going to turn this suave mystery down. He tried reciprocating the cool composure, wanting desperately for something to make for a great friendship.

"Only if you stick around a while."

That afternoon Will learned a lot about Mike and his friends. That Dustin and Lucas have been a "thing" since before time began and that anyone who said anything bad about it could shove it. That Jane was the coolest person ever, you just wouldn't know behind the simple facade. That Max was a self described "useless lesbian" and Mike definitely agreed. That Mike and Jane were Romeo and Juliet but way, way better and with a lot less death. And he most definitely

learned he wants to be a part of the odd cast of characters that made up the ‘party’.

The next day, Mike invited him to the party’s table, and Will felt euphoric.

“So you mean to tell me, your mom just said to herself, ‘right, I’m going to pack up and go to *Hawkins* ’?” Lucas asked, Will nodding timidly in response. He hadn’t told them the whole thing, how could he just say ‘my dad hit my mom a little too hard this time’?

“Do you know how impossible it is to find this place? Max only came here because her stepdad has business dealings here. You? You’re a wildcard Byers.” Dustin informed. *A wildcard* . That sounds like the most cool thing. And said about him?

“Were you leaving anyone behind? I’m sure you had tons of friends left heartbroken at your departure.”

“No, not really. I sat with people, but we weren’t really friends. Just people to do group projects with because everyone else is unbearable. You know what a person I’ve sat with since near kindergarten said when I said I was leaving?” The group eagerly awaited his answer. “‘What’s your name again?’ Am I that invisible?”

“I assure you, you are not invisible. She’s probably just ignorant of a great guy.” Mike reassured, comforting Will.

“So what do you like?” Max changed the topic, and Will was more than happy to enlighten the group with the music of Bowie and the Talking Heads.

School wasn’t nearly as impossible to get used to with the party. They were in their own little world, and no one’s cruel intentions could change that. He was certain he wouldn’t have a perfect grade by the end of the year, but he slowly got into a swing of fun times with the party and efficiently working, and helping the others reach their full potential. They encourage his art, and it makes him feel really, really

happy. Happier than he's been in a very long time. With Lonnie, or his old group, all he could feel was static, making art for nobody but himself to see, and therefore making him obsess over every fault. With the appraisal of his friends, he felt worthy. He loved them.

The day they went to see Return of the Living Dead 2 in the cinema was amazing. Dustin and Lucas were hilariously rambunctious, Max was making cynical comments at every second and everyone felt great. Will felt a little jealous of the kisses between Mike and Jane, but he had to admit they were cute. The Party had been Will's friends now for 26 days, and he was still relishing every moment. The moments like this, where they're alone in a cinema, each person truly themselves.

Will was terrified of hypothermia, but jumping into the waters of the quarry was a liberating feeling. It had been 33 days since he became friends with the party, and each day felt endless. Jumping into the water, he let go of every fear gripping him. At the same time, he came out to his friends.

"I knew he was gay!" A proud Dustin exclaimed. "10 bucks Wheeler!"

"I'm not THAT obvious am I?" He asked, worried that he immediately gave off that impression.

"Yes, you are." Dustin, Max and Lucas all said in near unison.

"Well I'm always going to be Will the Wildcard!"

"That you are." Max agreed. Will had adopted the title for the games of Dungeons and Dragons that were celebrated events for the group. He had assumed the role of the cleric, as the Party was missing one. One time they even had a campaign in Castle Byers, which everyone thought was an impressive place.

Being friends with the party sometimes had its downfalls, but they

were usually only temporary. Bullying wasn't something Will wasn't terribly familiar with, mostly because he kept to himself but was never alone. But the Party were used to it, so Will tried to be too. They mocked him sometimes, people like Troy Harrington, but he wasn't really the target. The Party didn't just stand and take it, they belittled it. One of Will's favourites was uttered by Dustin: "Maybe the reason you keep talking about what we do with our dicks is because you have an obsession with them, maybe you're the one who is actually gay!" He had a broken nose for a while after, but it was decidedly worth it.

The Palace Arcade was the greatest place in all of Hawkins for entertainment. You can't beat the intense competition in attempting to pass Max's record-breaking score in Dig Dug, a game she was well versed in. Surprisingly, Jane took top of the leaderboard for Pacman, a game that for no reason other than natural ability, she can beat. She prefers to read instead of play, so it isn't as if she has practice. Seeing Mike's eyes illuminate when he wins something gives Will a fantastic feeling, it's like seeing a supernova inside someone's soul.

The Party, ironically, didn't really do parties. However, school dances were not parties. Late February brought the Sadie Hawkins dance, which both girls violently protested as having no point. In the end Jane did ask Mike, and through him being the only single party member, Max asked Will. They decided to go purely as friends. When it came to Dustin and Lucas, neither were girls. However, Dustin being Dustin, put on a trashy old wig of Jane's and asked out Lucas in the most absurdly romantic way ever. Only they could make stupidity look sweet. When it came to the slow dance, Mike and Jane took to the floor, unaware of their luckiness. Dustin and Lucas took to the AV room just down the hall, because Hawkins just isn't ready for them yet. And Will and Max stood watching love stories they could never have.

"We'll find people one day, right?" Will innocently questioned, feeling a little put down by the whole ordeal.

“Of course we will, Byers. The key is, we have to find the right ones. Do you like Wheeler?”

Will was taken aback by Max’s imposing question, not even fully knowing the answer himself.

“Maybe. I’ve never been so close to so many great people, but there’s just something about him.”

“You’re so cliche Byers.”

“You’re cliche for falling for your best friend, MadMax.”

“We’re walking, talking cliches, what’s new?”

On March 21st Will told them all everything, fully letting his heart pour out. About Lonnie, and his mother’s underpaying job, and the fact he’d always had a fear of being alone. He told them about Jonathan not having come home for Christmas, or returning his and his mother’s calls. And he told them about what the next day would be. His 17th birthday was celebrated by a sleepover of hugs and laughter, and most importantly jamming to all Will’s favourite songs. They told him all about their pasts, and it felt like he was getting to know them again.

“Did you know my New Year’s Resolution was to talk to you?” Mike had confessed.

“Mike we met on December 31st. Day before everyone else.”

“Yeah, I’d done everything I’d wanted to before the year had even begun. I’d say I did a pretty good job of it.”

The Party had all said what theirs were, read 30 books (Jane), beat Max in Dig Dug (Dustin), Get all As (Lucas).

“Mine? Mine was… to make a friend.” Will received a lot of hugs and awws.

“Hey you’d done everything you’d wanted to before the year had

even begun too!” Mike remarked.

“I guess I did.” Will felt warm inside and after more chatter everyone fell asleep. It was sweet.

“Will, do you copy?”

“I copy, what’s up Max, over.”

“I really love you, over.”

“I love you too, are you okay, you sound like you’re crying, over”

“It’s cause I am, over.”

“Why? Over.”

“I love her so fucking much! Over.”

“I know, do you want me to come over? Over.”

“It’s fine. You love him too, right? Over.”

“Yeah. Over.”

“We’re useless aren’t we? Over”

“We really are, over.”

A tearful conversation turned into Max speaking to Will every night at 2am on the dot. It could be about anything and everything, but sometimes it sounded like she was struggling to push out the words. She just described it as desiring to desire. Sometimes she showed up to school with bruises, and they both knew what from. He’s pretty sure Max just really needed a friend. But he hoped he’d helped her feel even a tiny bit better, like she and the Party had helped him. One thing Will has learned is that he’s so lucky to be able to love them.

Will was 17, and decidedly a fan of moving. A fan of moving and the

now serene evenings, strolling through Hawkins with a Party member, or playing a campaign, or helping his mom. He was a fan of having and loving friends, real friends.

Author's Note:

> thank you for reading this! i just spent the last 4 hours writing it and i hope you enjoy it! i tried to take a more simple narrating style for this, in which it could easily just be will describing his life in major moments, i don't know if it worked but i'd hope so! once again thank you for reading!